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NORTHERN COUNTIES ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND.

Council Chamber,  
Town Hall,  
Oldham.

Wednesday,  
December 13th, 1933.  
11.15 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.

Quarterly Meeting of the General Committee.

M I N U T E S.

Chairman:  
Councillor W.E. YORKE,  
Sheffield.

Present.

Councillor Andrew, Mr. G. Baslington, Mr. E.V. Bradshaw, Mr. F. Broadbent, Councillor J.A. Clydesdale, Mr. C.A. Coward, Mr. J.A. Cox, Miss G. Cracknall, Miss M.E. Crooke, Councillor T. Crowe, Miss M. Field, Councillor J.W. Flanagan, Mr. W.B. Fletcher, Miss G. Foster, Mr. Frankland, Mrs. Gannon, Councillor N. Garrow, Alderman F. Greenwood, Mrs. Greenwood, Councillor Halstead, Councillor J. Hamill, Mr. Hardy, Mr. J. Hawthorn, Miss A.M. Hower, Mrs. Heys, Mr. A. Hill, Miss Holden, Councillor Holland, Mr. F. Holroyd, Dr. W. Howarth, Mr. R. Hughes, Councillor Hurley, Mr. A. Jenkinson, Councillor R.O. Jones, Dr. G.W.N. Joseph, Mr. W. Kershaw, Alderman Lees, Councillor Leftwich, Captain Liakhoff, Dr. J. Maddison, Alderman Hedley Mason, Mr. J.H. Mines, Mr. J. Nadin, Mrs. Nelson, Mr. R. Newson, Alderman G. O'Neil, Mr. G. O'Neill, Mr. H. Owen, Mr. Pitchford, Mrs. L.C. Pollard, Mr. G.A. Preston, Mr. T.W. Richardson, Councillor F.W. Roberts, Captain F.H. Robinson, Miss E. Robinson, Alderman H.E. Rose, Alderman Russell, Councillor Scargill, Mr. A. Siddall, Mrs. S. Simmons, Captain A.J.C. Singleton, Councillor Mrs. Smith, Mr. R.J. Smith, Lieutenant J. Swales, Mr. S. Swallow, Mr. W.P. Swann, Mr. A. Sykes, Mr. R. Taylor, Miss C. Tetley, Councillor J.E. Tolson, Mr. M. Tomlinson, Miss E.S. Watts, Mr. A.J. Wetherell, Mr. W. Whitehead, Dr. Wilkinson, Councillor and Mrs. M. Williamson, Councillor Mrs. Wilson, Councillor W.E. Yorke, the Secretary and others.  
Representatives of the Press.

Prior to the meeting a number of delegates were taken by bus to see the Institution for the Blind and the Blind Women's Industries, Oldham, which were also open to visitors during the afternoon of the previous day.

MORNING SESSION, 11.0 a.m.

1. Welcome by the Deputy Mayor, Alderman E. BARDSLEY, J.P.

The Deputy Mayor, in welcoming the delegates to Oldham, said theirs was a town which had a great deal of poverty, and he was proud of the town and of the people, who were suffering the aftermath of the War. He himself had been born in the town, had never left it except for holiday, and looked like dying in it, and he remembered it from being very young, as he had started work at the age of seven. There had been raging - he used the word advisedly - a debate as to whether Oldham should have a municipal centre and workshop for the blind or continue under the voluntary system. They were at present doing a good work and he personally was entirely in favour of voluntary work in relation to the blind, particularly as they had been able to place the blind on such a good footing. They had spent nearly £6,000 on extensions and had also a very nice reserve fund, and were at present treating their blind people as well as anyone could.





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In the Borough area they had 284 blind people and in the outlying districts which came under their jurisdiction they had 106. The annual grants by the Local Authorities were £1,600 to the men's Workshops and £600 to the Blind Women's Industries. The School for the Blind had on its register seven blind children, five boys and two girls, and twenty-six partially sighted children. The County Borough employed one part time and three full time Home Teachers who visited the homes of the blind, the municipal institution and hospital, the Royal Infirmary, the Workshops for the Blind and the Blind Women's Industries. A handicrafts class was held every Tuesday afternoon and a Social Centre on Tuesday evenings. There were Social Centres at Middleton, Shaw, and would be a further centre at Shaw in the New Year. Concerts and entertainments were also held, and outings took place in the summer months. Oldham had a very active Blind Persons Act Sub-Committee in connection with the Education Department, of which he himself was the Chairman, and it was a work in which he took a great deal of interest.

He unfortunately had to leave the meeting, but there were several members of the Committee present who would give any information required. He wished the conference every success in its discussions.

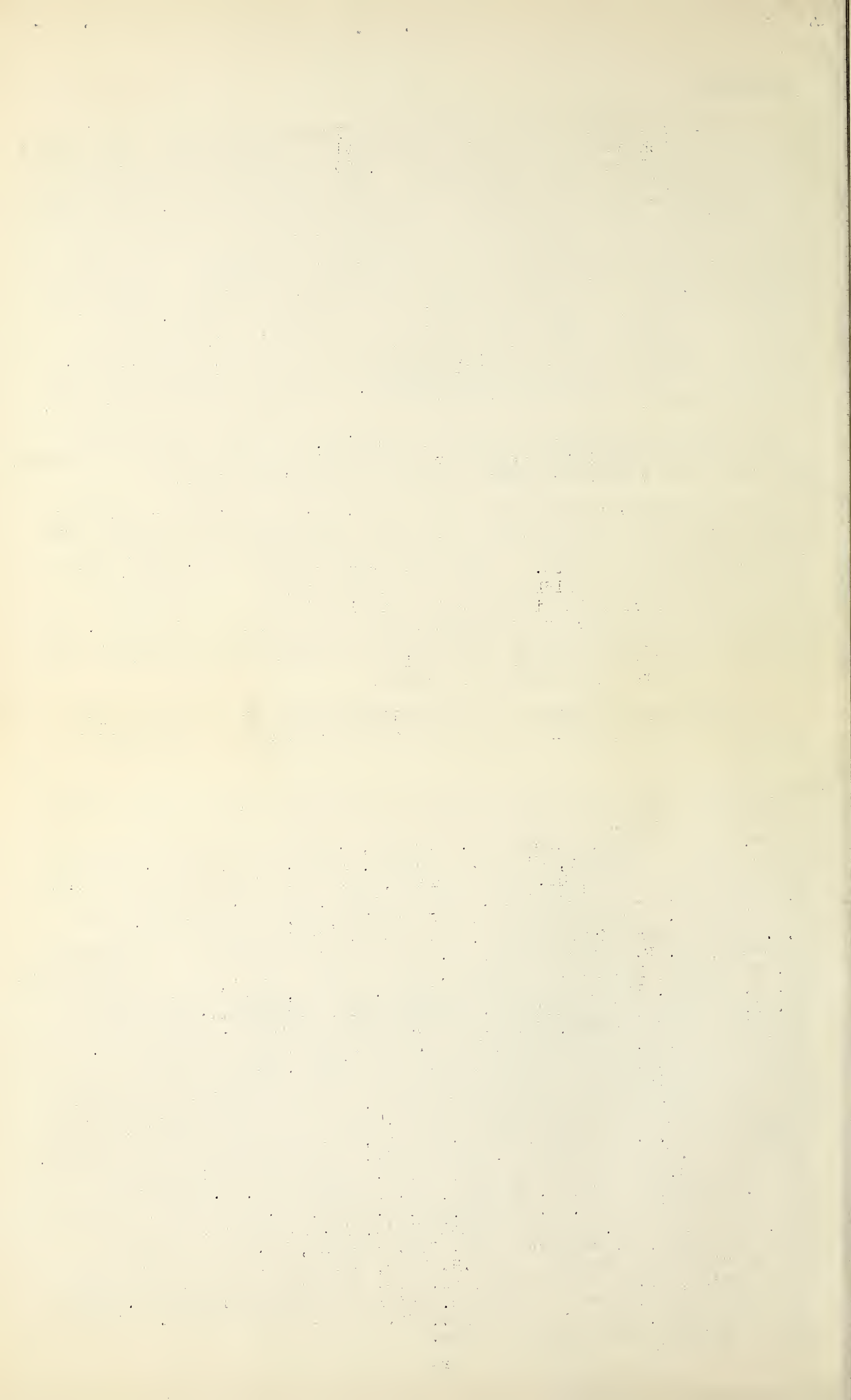
The CHAIRMAN said the Deputy Mayor need not apologise for the fact that Oldham was small or that there was a great deal of poverty. The Association was proud that delegates had been given such a generous welcome in spite of this. Oldham was part of the Association, whose duty was the same to Oldham as to any larger town. The Association would not be fulfilling its functions if it did not, in terms of propaganda and service particularly, serve every part of its area. He thanked the Deputy Mayor for his presence at the meeting, and said that later he would take another opportunity of giving thanks for what had been done for the Association in Oldham.

The DEPUTY MAYOR said he was exceedingly sorry that he could not take any further part in the meeting as he had another engagement to fulfil.

## 2. Apologies.

As there were a very large number of apologies the list (see below) was taken as read.

Dr. F. Allardice, Alderman C. Aveling, Captain W.G. Bagnall, Councillor D.J. Bailey, Miss M.E. Bailey, Dr. W. Barr, Mr. A. Beilby, Councillor H.P. Bell, Mr. W.H. Bennett, Dr. H.R. Bickerton, Councillor E. Bloom, Mr. G.W. Bloomfield, Mr. H. Bodden, Miss N. Brookes, Councillor J. Wesley Brown, Dr. J.J. Buchan, Dr. G.G. Buckley, Miss I.V. Burges, Dame Maud Burnett, Dr. M.G. Cardwell, Mrs. Kathleen Chambers, Dr. R. Veitch Clark, Mr. S. Cope, Councillor C.T. Crankshaw, Mr. M. Dorran, Mr. E.J.W. Douglas, Mr. W. McG. Eagar, Mr. H.S. Essenhigh, Dr. G. Foggin, Dr. R.M. Galloway, Dr. N. Gebbie, Dr. C. More Geddie, Dr. J.M. Gibson, Councillor T. Gilberthorpe, Alderman J. Gilliland, Councillor E.S. Graham, Mr. E. Greenhalgh, Alderman S. Hall, Mr. F. Hamilton, Mr. D.L. Harbottle, Mr. R. Hargreaves, Mr. J.A. Hartley, Dr. F. Hauxwell, Mr. R. Herley, Dr. J.P. Higham, Mr. W.H. Hill, Alderman W. Hindle, Mr. J.E. Holden, Miss L.E. Jackson, Sister Joseph, Mr. L.C. King-Wilkinson, Miss K.E. Lambe, Dr. D.C. Lamont, Councillor M. Lees, Councillor T.S. Lomax, Miss M. Lyon, Dr. D.C. Lyons, Dr. H.H. McNabb, Dr. P.R. McNaught, Mr. T. Mackay, Mr. H. Macpherson, Miss M.E. Mace, Dr. H. Mason, Miss E.A. Massey, Dr. G.G. Oakley, Mrs. F.A. Ogden, Councillor G. Oliver, Dr. J. Orr, Mr. S. Osborne, Councillor J. Parsons, Mr. H. Partington, Mr. J. Patrick, Mr. A. Platt, Mr. M. Priestley, Sir Walter Raine, Mrs. E. Rawden, Mr. H. Reed, Dr. J. Rennie, Dr. G.C.F. Roe, Dr. J.A. Ross, Dr. E.H. Scholefield, Dr. A. Semple, Councillor W.H. Shaw, Mrs. F. Somervell, Mr. S.E. Stevens, Mr. C.W. Stevens, Dr. D. Stenhouse Stewart, Mr. W.H. Tate, Councillor J.H. Taylor, Mr. W.A. Taylor, Dr. V.T. Thierens, Mr. H.G. Thornley, Miss A. Townsend, Mr. J.W. Turner, Miss B.E. Urmson, Major C.A. Valentine, Dr. R. Wear, Dr. H.V. White, Dr. W.F.J. Whitley, Dr. F.T.H. Wood, Miss E. Wright, Dr. J. Wright, Councillor J. Young.





3. Minutes of the Meeting held in Sheffield on September 28th, 1933, which had been circulated, were taken as read, approved, signed and adopted.

Arising:-

Co-ordination of National Work for the Blind. It was agreed to deal with this item under paragraph 11 of the Report of the Executive Committee.

4. Report of Executive Committee.

It was moved by the CHAIRMAN and seconded by the VICE-CHAIRMAN that the Report, which had been circulated, be adopted.

The CHAIRMAN then read through the headings of the report seriatim, inviting comments on each paragraph.

In connection with paragraph 3, "Certification and Prevention of Blindness", Dr. JOSEPH said he had nothing to add to this, but he was willing to answer questions in connection with it.

Captain ROBINSON, in connection with the statement that, of occupations for males, Mining showed the highest number of cases of blindness, said that it had recently been mentioned in the press that the provision of a powerful electric light in coal mines was likely to reduce blindness. He asked whether the Medical Sub-Committee had any further comment to make in reference to this.

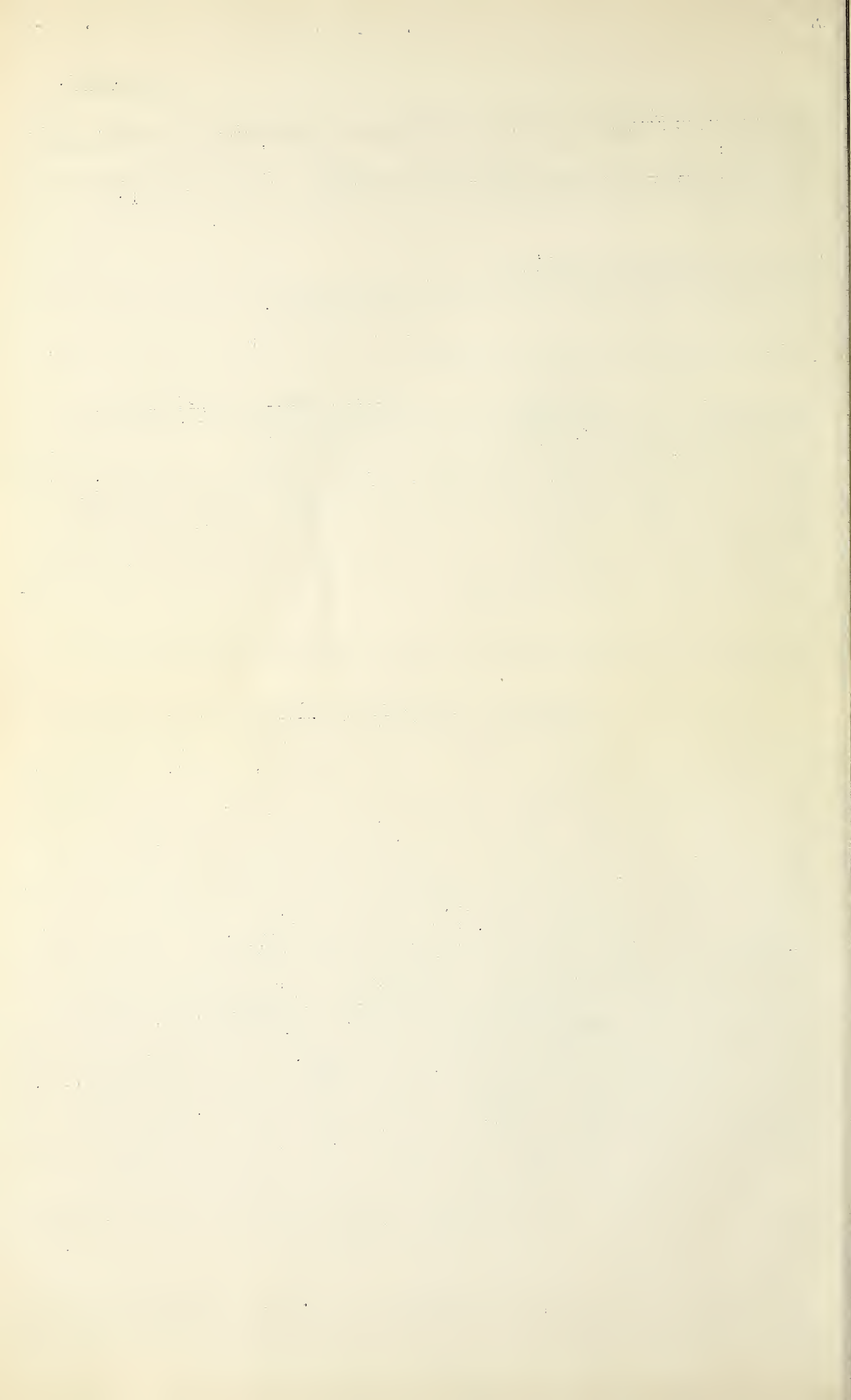
Dr. JOSEPH said the Sub-Committee had only just started to consider these figures, but he agreed that better lighting would have a beneficial effect on the eyesight of miners.

The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the fact that a copy of C.C. Hurst's "Mechanism of Creative Evolution" had been purchased and could be borrowed from the office of the Association.

In reference to paragraph 7, "Wireless for the Blind", Mr. SIDDALL (Rochdale) said he thought the time was coming when we should draw the attention of the British Wireless for the Blind Fund to the fact that the age for earphones had almost, if not completely, passed, and the age for loudspeakers definitely come. They should be told that earphones were particularly troublesome to blind people, because, whereas sighted people used them for a short period only, for a blind man it was a means of passing time away. It was even probable that earphones had a detrimental effect on the ears. It seemed as though the Wireless Fund was antagonistic to community wireless. They were making a great mistake because this was their opportunity of meeting the position with regard to the use of loud speakers. (Hear! Hear!). One had also to remember that some blind people, probably the majority, had difficulty in manipulating sets. In Rochdale the community people had offered for a payment of sixpence per week per blind person to maintain the supply so long as the blind person had a loudspeaker. He calculated that it was almost impossible to maintain a respectable wireless set at less than sixpence a week. Also there was no trouble about batteries and repairs, no appealing to the Fund for upkeep, and the supply was far better. The blind person had nothing to do but turn a handle. He hoped the meeting would support him in urging the British Wireless for the Blind Fund that, if the community people suggested anything like a reasonable charge, the attempt to force them to supply the blind person free of charge by appealing to the Local Authorities not to grant them a licence would not be persisted in. They were reducing the cost to at least one-third and had to maintain a wire from their depot to the house in question.

There was also to be considered the method of dividing the money raised by the appeals to the public, whether it should be on a capitation basis or otherwise. He moved that the Association request the British Wireless for the Blind Fund to consider sympathetically the question of community wireless.

Captain ROBINSON (Barrow in Furness) said he would like to support Mr. Siddall in this matter of community wireless. He thought that if the National Fund was continuing indefinitely certain sums of money should be apportioned for the purchase of loudspeakers or for maintenance





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where a Local Society had taken advantage of community wireless. He could see that the Fund would resent anything of this kind because they had contracted for the purchase of large numbers of sets, and if community wireless were introduced their sets would become redundant and would have to be returned to them. But the benefit to the individual blind person must be considered rather than the position of the British Wireless for the Blind Fund, and community wireless was undoubtedly the thing for the blind and should receive assistance in the direction indicated.

Councillor CLYDESDALE (Newcastle upon Tyne), speaking as a representative of a Local Authority, said we were moving too quickly and should not say we were prepared to pay anything to firms running community wireless. They were exploiting what was becoming a public service. Only last year one Corporation (Middlesbrough) had included in its Bill an attempt to municipalise its wireless service. Sooner or later it would be municipalised. If we rushed in now we should not do the blind any good except in Rochdale, where universal wireless was well developed. The seconder of the motion knew very well that a large number of his blind people were outside the Borough in a County area which could not be served by universal wireless. Half the population could not be served in this way. It was too early to welcome the idea. It was a thing which was coming, but the success in the Rochdale area did not prove anything. Already firms paid as much as £500 per annum to the Corporation for the right to exploit the community. Sooner or later the need would become obvious and the community would take it over. The difficulty of doing this would be increased if the movement grew at this stage. He agreed that crystal sets with earphones should be abolished.

Mrs. SIMMONS (Burnley) said that in her area they had left only six sets from the British Wireless for the Blind Fund. About 150 blind people had loud speakers and these had been wired at a cost of 25s. Od. per head. If an aged blind couple lived together they had free service. Where there were young sighted people in the house the service had to be paid for. They were having very favourable treatment from the national Fund.

Mr. SIDDALL said there was no question of trying to assist the community wireless but we wanted to stop any action which would prevent it from going forward. The Wireless Fund were trying to prevent it. It was known that there were difficulties and that certain Corporations had not up to the present consented. But if the blind persons could get it at sixpence per head so much the better. His Society had started with crystal sets and had paid to have these installed. They had now become obsolete but the Wireless Fund would not provide substitutes nor even pay the return carriage on them, and he had to assist the blind people to get other means of wireless.

The CHAIRMAN said that the discussion had revealed that there was no fixed opinion in the meeting. What was good in one part of the area might be bad in another. Mr. SIDDALL agreed not to press the motion if the Executive Committee undertook to examine the matter.

Mr. HUGHES asked what was the position of a trainee who wanted a wireless set but was only at home at weekends. Was he entitled to a free licence?

Captain ROBINSON said that the Clerk to the Council was responsible for the issue of certificates for wireless licences, and it rested very largely on him what the decision was. But in his area a trainee who was at home only at weekends would get a licence. He thought pressure should be brought to bear if there was difficulty.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that anyone who had difficulties should communicate with the office of the Association.

In reference to paragraph 9, "Supervision", Dr. JOSEPH pointed out that Warrington was not included among the places visited by the Supervisor. The CHAIRMAN apologised for the omission.

Councillor CLYDESDALE said he noticed Sunderland on the list of places visited. He had been in Sunderland the previous week and it was said that on October 21st Mr. Bradshaw had seen two trainees and approved





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them or examined them for employment. They had told him that nothing had been done officially as a result of any report from him in the way of employing these trainees. He wanted to know whether that delay was due to the Supervisor or was he getting the blame for someone else's omission.

Mr. BRADSHAW (North Regional Supervisor) said that the question of employment was a matter for arrangement between the Local Authority and its agent. He had been requested not to send in his report on one trainee until he heard further from the Local Authority. The report on the other trainee had gone in. Employment was not the business of the Supervisor. He thought that in Sunderland it was a question of accommodation.

Councillor CLYDESDALE said he did not blame Mr. Bradshaw, but Mr. Bradshaw was being blamed for the delay. He hoped we did not encourage any Local Authority to make a convenience of the Supervisor. Mr. Bradshaw said he had delayed reporting until he received an instruction from the Local Authority. If this was the practice it was abominable and was not straightforward administration. This was Mr. Bradshaw's own statement and Councillor Clydesdale still pressed the view that if the report had been sent in some action should have been taken by the Local Authority.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Association could not compel the Local Authority to act. The report before the meeting was a report on the Supervisor's work. He suggested that if the speaker would communicate with the office the matter would be dealt with.

Councillor CLYDESDALE said it was wrong for any official to make a convenience of Mr. Bradshaw or for the Supervisor to act on anyone's instigation.

Councillor FLANAGAN suggested that the meeting should hear what Mr. Bradshaw had to say.

Mr. BRADSHAW said he thought the Committee did understand the position. With regard to Supervision the matter had been thrashed out and it was no use Councillor Clydesdale saying he did not understand it. With regard to Councillor Clydesdale's going about the area getting information about approvals and reports, there was not anyone who could state that reports had not been received within the agreed time according to his contract. If, for convenience, he examined a person during term and was requested not to send in the report until the end of the term he took his instructions from the Local Authority and not from the Voluntary Society. If Councillor Clydesdale or anyone else was not satisfied he would be glad to answer to his Committee.

Mr. WHITEHEAD pointed out that the Supervisor was not the servant of the Association but of the Local Authority, the Association being the agency through which he was employed. He acted under the instructions of the individual Local Authorities.

Alderman HEDLEY MASON (Durham) said he was a member of the Sunderland Institution for the Blind. He was glad that Councillor Clydesdale was taking such an interest in Sunderland. He was a representative of the Durham County Council and did not know the ages of the trainees referred to, but Mr. Bradshaw was aware that the Sunderland Institution had an age limit for employment. There had been a conference about that limit. If those trainees had been passed and not employed it was because there was no accommodation.

Councillor FLANAGAN said Mr. Whitehead had laid down an interpretation with which he frankly disagreed. If members thought back to the scheme they would remember that not only did the Association employ the Supervisor but the Executive Committee had set out his work. That was not to be interpreted to mean that any backward Local Authority could take over the direction of Mr. Bradshaw's supervision. He was a member of a Local Education Authority which periodically received reports, adverse and otherwise, from H.M. Inspector on their Schools and Institutions. It would be an unheard of thing if any Local Authority were to ask H.M.I. to hold back a report. When Mr. Bradshaw was asked to defer the report he should have said that it was a matter for decision by the Executive Committee of his Association. It was a very dangerous precedent. He thought Councillor Clydesdale's observations were timely and justified, and he hoped the matter would be dealt with at the next Executive Committee Meeting.





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The CHAIRMAN said he was sure the meeting would agree that the work of the Supervisor was both difficult and delicate. It needed a great deal of tact and diplomacy. If any constituents had any grievance or complaint they should let the Executive Committee know. They accepted responsibility and would deal with it. (Hear! Hear!)

It was agreed to leave the matter to the Executive Committee.

In reference to paragraph 10, "Travelling Facilities for the Blind", Councillor CLYDESDALE said he could not agree with the recommendation that only registered blind persons should be granted special travelling facilities. There were cases which were not registered through no fault of their own.

Dr. JOSEPH pointed out that previously facilities had only been granted to totally blind persons. The recommendation was intended to extend those facilities to all registered blind persons, whether partially or totally blind.

The CHAIRMAN also emphasised that the effect of the recommendation would be to extend the special travelling facilities to a greater number than at present, but, if Councillor Clydesdale could suggest any way of increasing still further the number benefiting, the Executive Committee would be pleased to consider it.

In reference to paragraph 11, "Co-ordination of National Work for the Blind", The CHAIRMAN recalled the discussion which had taken place at the last Quarterly Meeting, and regretted that there had been some confusion in the minds of some delegates owing to inadequate time for discussion, the blame for which, however, attached neither to himself nor to his colleagues. The series of resolutions which had eventually been approved had the desired effect. Instead of being committed to a new structure which might have imperilled the position of the North delegates would not now be committed to anything which they had not had an opportunity of examining and approving. The attitude of the General Committee had been summed up in the short paragraph contained in the Executive Committee's Report:- "Having regard to the Resolutions and Memorandum approved at the last Quarterly Meeting of the Northern Counties Association for the Blind, the Association does not consider itself as bound by any arrangement which may be made jointly by the Union of Counties Associations and the National Institute for the Blind, but willingly takes part in negotiations which attempt to devise a scheme for a complete regional and national arrangement."

Negotiations had, however, completely broken down on the basis on which they were previously proceeding. They had been ill-conceived from the first. He was not prepared to attack them because he had been appointed to make the best of them and had to be loyal to his colleagues, but the position was now clearer. We might now approach the matter not in terms of secret diplomacy but in terms of open negotiation, without imposing the will of those who might be more powerful in terms of voting strength on those who were weaker under existing arrangements.

There was another point. Inside these negotiations they had fought very hard to give the North full regional expression. He did not wish to be derogatory to the other Counties Associations but he could say that in terms of service and efficiency the Northern Counties were in front of all the others put together. The money received was used for improving the efficiency of the service to the blind. Those responsible for asking for a new arrangement had done so because money contributed to the Counties Associations for regional purposes had been automatically redistributed to other Societies. If this was the only purpose to which they could put their income it was certainly time for the Counties Associations to be scrapped. The North had improved its machinery as far as it could, and had reached the stage when it was entitled to ask the County Councils Association and the Association of Municipal Corporations for their criticisms on its work. He hoped that delegates would accept his word that so far as the North was concerned nothing would be done until the delegates had had an opportunity of expressing an opinion on the proposals put forward.





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Councillor CLYDESDALE asked for a further statement. He drew attention to the fact that at the meeting of the Union of Counties Associations Mr. Lovett had said that the purpose of the discussions on co-ordination was to preserve the voluntary system. That was not the purpose of co-ordination as far as the North was concerned, and he would like that statement to be made. He thought it was important, as in his opinion co-ordination would be of no use whatever unless it had a wider scope than that.

The CHAIRMAN said that he had tried to keep the discussion within the terms of the report before the meeting. It certainly was the desire in some parts of the country to encourage the voluntary system and ignore the Local Authorities. In the North we were in the happy position of having a completely harmonious arrangement between Local Authorities on the one hand and voluntary associations on the other. We should do all we possibly could to prevent the advocates of either side tying the Northern Counties Association down to one particular point of view. The Association would fight for the retention of that harmonious relationship which did not appear to have been achieved elsewhere.

Miss HOLDEN (National League of the Blind, Manchester) pointed out that, though the National Library for the Blind, the College of Teachers and the Association of Workshops were mentioned, there was no mention of representatives of organisations of the blind among those who were to discuss co-ordination.

Councillor FLANAGAN (Bradford), reading from a report of the meeting of the Union of Counties Associations which had been prepared by the Secretary of the Association for the information of the Executive Committee, assured Miss Holden that they had not been forgotten by the representatives of the Association, who had endeavoured to secure the inclusion of the National League of the Blind in the deliberations in reference to co-ordination.

In reference to paragraph 12, "Superannuation", Mr. KERSHAW (Oldham) asked who was to be included in the suggested Superannuation Scheme.

The CHAIRMAN explained that it was felt that those employed in the Blind Welfare Service should have the same benefits as those in municipal service. The Scheme would be as comprehensive as possible but nothing definite could be said about the matter at the moment.

In reference to paragraph 13, "Appointment of new Secretary", Councillor GARROW (Northumberland) asked for the terms of appointment of the new Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN replied that the appointment would be on the same lines as the present one, the commencing salary being £350 per annum.

Councillor GARROW reminded the Chairman that there had been a suggestion at the last meeting for a basic salary and annual increments.

The CHAIRMAN replied that the question of increments would be considered later.

Councillor CLYDESDALE objected to the statement in the advertisement that no knowledge of blind welfare was necessary.

A copy of the advertisement was not available but the CHAIRMAN said that according to the advertisement knowledge of blind welfare was desirable, but applications from persons with other suitable qualifications would be considered.

Councillor CLYDESDALE said that had he been at the Executive Committee meeting when that was decided he would not have consented to its inclusion. There was a tendency for Blind Welfare to become too statistical and not sufficiently practical. Any fool could fill in a form (Cries of No!). Practical knowledge was an essential qualification for any supervisory post. Even Home Teachers had now to be certificated and in the near future instructors in training centres would have to be certificated. A person had been appointed without practical knowledge of blind welfare. (Objection was raised to this statement as no appointment had yet been made). Councillor Clydesdale insisted that the damage was done, a short list having been prepared on an advertisement which had put the principal item into a secondary place. He could not understand how any person could be successful in the post without a knowledge of blind welfare. He had a copy of the short list and could inform the meeting that there was no-one with such experience amongst the six candidates to be interviewed on the following day.





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There was considerable feeling against Councillor Clydesdale's disclosure of information which was as yet confidential to the Executive Committee.

The CHAIRMAN said he was bound to defend the position of the Executive Committee. It did not matter whether he agreed or not; Councillor Clydesdale was given the same information as other members and extraordinary precautions were taken that the terms of the advertisement should be approved by the Committee.

In response to an interjection by Councillor CLYDESDALE that he had not been present at the meeting, the CHAIRMAN pointed out that if he had sent a letter due regard would have been paid to it. It was not fair to take advantage of his privileged position which could only be fully dealt with by making known at this stage all the information which was as yet confidential. He had tried to give every consideration to Councillor Clydesdale's point of view but he was also bound to defend the Executive Committee.

Councillor GARROW said he had not seen the advertisement but he was not satisfied unless mention was made of annual increments. If a maximum salary had been mentioned there might have been a greater number of applicants. He saw no reason why the terms of the appointment should be the special knowledge of the Executive Committee.

The CHAIRMAN said that the list of duties of the Secretary were available, and as it was the wish of the meeting he read them in full.

The report of the Executive Committee was then passed, Councillor CLYDESDALE dissenting.

In reference to paragraph 14, "General Committee - Attendance of Members", Dr. JOSEPH said the fact that only seven authorities had not sent representatives to the last six meetings was very gratifying. It showed how the work of the Association was appreciated. He wondered if there would be any objection to the names of the seven being read out, not from the point of view of censure, but with the idea that if Mahomet would not come to the Mountain the Mountain might occasionally go to Mahomet.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that this might be brought up under "Date and Place of Next Meeting". This was agreed.

#### 5. Matters brought forward by Constituents.

##### (a) Certification - Oldham County Borough.

Mr. KERSHAW (Oldham) said the matter he wished to bring up was connected with registration, and it had already caused difficulty in some other parts of the area. He proposed to cite one case. Some little time ago they had had an application from a man in the town for registration as a blind person. It had been the practice for a long time to send all applicants to an Ophthalmic Surgeon, and the same was done in this case. The man was not certified as blind within the meaning of the Blind Persons Act, 1920. He also applied for a pension. They had always worked in close conjunction with the Pension Committees, and on this occasion were asked if the man in question was a blind person. Mr. Kershaw had to reply that the Ophthalmic Surgeon had declared him not blind, and as a result the Pensions Committee refused to grant the application. The man appealed to the Ministry, who had him examined by their Regional Medical Officer. Mr. Kershaw was not aware that he was a specialist in ophthalmic work, but he declared the man to be blind within the meaning of the Act, and the Pension Committee had to pay the pension. The Act had been in operation for about thirteen years and Mr. Kershaw suggested that it was time for machinery to be set up to prevent this state of things occurring anywhere. He would be glad if the Executive Committee could take up the matter to ensure that such a thing could not happen.

Dr. JOSEPH said he thought this was a very important point, and that everyone was in agreement with Mr. Kershaw. At the moment the Government Departments concerned were considering the matter and progress was always slow when several departments were concerned. Old Age Pensions were under the Customs and Excise Department and Blind Welfare was under the Ministry of Health. The application of the definition of blindness was not exactly





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the same and appeals had to go to two separate quarters. It would, however, certainly assist and not be at all harmful to send a resolution from the Executive Committee. He then made a suggestion for a resolution which might be put forward to the Executive Committee: "That in order to secure greater uniformity in the administration of benefits to blind persons the Minister of Health be recommended to consider the advisability of establishing that the same method of certification of blindness by medical practitioners with special experience in Ophthalmology should be in operation for the purposes both of the Blind Persons Act and the Old Age Pensions Act, and of prescribing the use of the same certificate (that is, B.D.8); and that where a joint regional referee service of ophthalmic surgeons has been or is provided in an area such regional service shall be used for appeal or doubtful cases under both these Acts."

Alderman ROSE (Liverpool) seconded the resolution and expressed the hope that it would result in action.

Councillor CLYDESDALE drew attention to the fact that the resolution might need amendment.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the resolution was intended for the Executive Committee, and Mr. SIDDALL and Councillor FLANAGAN suggested that the meeting should agree to support the spirit of the resolution and let it go forward as a basis.

It was agreed to refer the matter to the Executive Committee.

(b) Blind Home Teachers - Barrow Society.

Captain ROBINSON (Barrow) asked the Association to give consideration to the employment of blind Home Teachers. Where Local Authorities or voluntary agencies were considering the appointment of a Home Teacher they should give preference to those blind Home Teachers who were already certificated. In the Northern area there were 124 sighted Home Teachers and 47 blind. There were six blind Home Teachers, trained and certificated, who had not obtained employment. A lot of money had been spent on these six alone, and they had probably attended Training Courses. Some of the very best Home Teachers were blind. He was not asking for something which was not done in his own area, where they employed three home teachers, of whom two must by regulation be blind. Some of the area was town and some country, but in neither did the blind have any difficulty. He thought the greatest objection was that the employment of a blind person made a little more work for the secretary and felt that the Northern Counties Association was partly responsible for the impression given. A blind man could not fill in certain forms unless he had a competent sighted guide, but in spite of that he thought an effort should be made to find employment for blind Home Teachers. He moved

"That this Association recommends its constituent bodies, when making appointments of Home Teachers, to give preference to certificated blind Home Teachers."

Miss HOLDEN seconded the resolution. There might be more than six blind Home Teachers unemployed, and one of her quarrels with some agencies was that they just applied to the Northern Counties Association and did not advertise posts. She hoped the resolution would be carried and that Local Authorities and agencies would give kindly consideration to blind Home Teachers. Though she supported municipalisation she was sorry to say that blind people did not get the same consideration from municipalities as from voluntary agencies. She had herself been on the short list several times but had not been appointed. She felt that there was a prejudice against blind Home Teachers. A blind Home Teacher was always replaced by a sighted person, yet she did not know of any case where a blind person had been dismissed as incompetent. There were many girls in Workshops who would make competent Home Teachers, and some who could be trained as typists and each Local Authority employ one. This would be another way of relieving the Workshops and reducing the monies paid in augmentation.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that to save time, as Captain Robinson was the Chairman of the Employment Sub-Committee, the resolution should be accepted in a general sense and the Sub-Committee asked to examine all its implications, making a recommendation at a future Quarterly Meeting.

This was agreed.





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6. Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Address by Captain A.J.C. SINGTON, Chairman, Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Captain SINGTON.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I first wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and your Committee, on behalf of my Society for giving me this opportunity of coming here to try to explain this little-known scheme of Welfare for the Blind.

Guide Dogs are trained to render the blind independent of human aid and to bring them freedom. In many cases they assist the blind to earn their living or to increase their earnings. I know of a girl in France blinded as a child by measles who had never been out alone for sixteen years. She gives violin lessons but could only take pupils who could come to her. She now has a Guide Dog and goes round to pupils' houses and she is busy all day and can thus earn a better living.

I cannot, of course, speak from actual personal experience of a blind man who has had a guide dog, but Mr. Frankland, who is here and has had one, will be able to answer any questions in this respect. I also refer you to an enthusiastic article in "Progress" written by a Mr. Morgan, of Walton, which some of you may have seen and which gives interesting details of his experience with his guide dog. He tells how he goes daily to his work by train to Liverpool, and how his dog takes him at four miles an hour from Lime Street Station across two miles of the busiest part of the City, a swing bridge and the docks, where he works, with their noisy shunting trains, motor lorries, cranes, etc., and back home safely again at night.

This movement started in 1915 in Germany, where the Government have established schools for supplying their War Blind with guide dogs. I have visited one of these schools and found it a most interesting experience. In Germany alone there are today about 5,000 of these dogs working. The movement has also spread to other countries, Switzerland, Italy, France, Holland, Belgium and America. Three trial courses were held here between 1930 and 1932 on behalf of the National Institute for the Blind. The results were so encouraging that it was decided to engage a permanent instructor who can train about twenty dogs per annum and who arrived here in October. This is a small beginning but the intention is that he should also train apprentices who will be able to train dogs and eventually in their turn train apprentices themselves. This instructor, Captain Liakhoff, will demonstrate outside after my speech with one of the eight dogs he is now training and has been training for about six weeks. Apprentices are most carefully selected, in spite of which some do not make good. It takes about three years to make a competent trainer capable of training dogs and about four years to make a head instructor capable of training apprentices as well as dogs. You see, these men must not only learn all about dogs, how to understand them and how to handle them, but they must also learn to know the blind, their point of view and their limitations.

Extensive experiments have been made by the Seeing Eye in Switzerland and America with various breeds of dogs, and it has been found that the German shepherd dogs lend themselves more easily to this type of work and of the different sheep herding breeds that have been tried give the best results. Here again, before the dogs are accepted for training they are most carefully selected and put through a character test to ensure that they have the right and perfect temperament. We are often asked if we only use bitches. We and the Seeing Eye use the female although in Germany they use males as well. There is no difference in intelligence between the sexes but the female has been found perhaps a little more affectionate, a little quieter and less easily distracted while working. We start training them at fourteen to fifteen months old, equivalent to fourteen to eighteen years in a human being. And so we come to the training or rather I should say education of the dogs. This takes three months, an instructor training eight dogs in that time out of these should secure a minimum of six trained dogs. You will see how important it is to get dogs of the right sort and temperament that are found to give the best results so as to have the highest possible output of successfully trained dogs. I said "educate" advisedly as there is a difference between a trained dog and an educated one. A trained dog is one who goes





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through certain exercises under the control of his master. An educated one is prepared for the work by systematic instruction based on knowledge of animal psychology so that the dog will draw its own conclusions as a guide dog has to do. The education must be one of developing the dog's initiative. The trainer from the start must study the dog and its mentality from the blind man's point of view and even in patting the dog his hand must fall gropingly. Ultimately the dog's intelligence is so developed that he is suited to become his master's eyes themselves.

The instruction is divided into three parts. The first consists of the seeing instructor working the dog every day over a given route through streets until the dog knows it by heart and learns to deal with any situations that may arise. The dog wears a special harness with a semi-stiff u-shaped handle by which her every movement and reaction is conveyed to her master's hand. The first stage takes about three months and when complete the dog goes at a really sharp pace, and keeping a steady pull on the handle held in her master's left hand she guides him round obstacles on the pavement such as pedestrians, manholes, barriers, trees, shop-awnings, etc. For curbs and steps she sits down close to the edge so that her master can find it with his foot or cane. If the street is clear she leads him carefully across, if not she stays on the path until it is clear. If whilst crossing a motor approaches she slows down or stops to let it pass, only going forward again when it is safe. Only this week a man from Stockport told me how in crossing the main road his dog pulled him out of the way of a car that flashed past at a high speed, and another, like others, writes me "I have no fear of traffic or other obstacles - the more the merrier". The dog knows the direction commands "Forward", "Left", "Right" (always taking a complete right-angle turn), and it is by these commands she takes her master where he wants to go. She picks up anything her master drops. A man tells me how his dog quickly recovered a dropped collar stud and others how their dogs retrieve their hats blown off by the wind when sent after them. Here is what a man has just written me: "One day at my workshop Olga would insist on annoying me. On putting my hand down to caress her I found she had my pension book in her mouth which must have dropped from my pocket outside the workshop."

The second stage starts when the blind man comes to the school for three weeks when the dog is turned over to her blind master. The dog now turns instructor and over the route she knows so well she teaches her master how to follow her signals. In the meantime the instructor, who has been following close behind to prevent accidents due to misunderstanding gradually lets the blind man and his dog more and more on their own until finally the third and final stage is reached when blind master and dog work perfectly as a unit, the master taking over the command and directing the dog to lead him where he wishes, which is the first time dogs have been trained to do this. For example, the blind man wishes to go somewhere which he knows or is told is the third to the right and second to the left, etc. He counts the crossings where the dog pauses when stepping off each pavement and at the correct place says "Right" or "Left" as the case may be.

Mr. Frankland can tell you how he surprised people he met at the Piccadilly Hotel, London, through arriving there in record time from the National Institute in Great Portland Street, although his dog had never been in London before. A workman who leads a routine life will be led by his dog after the third or fourth day without further commands. For instance, Mr. Morgan, whom I mentioned, arrived with his dog on the first occasion he brought her by train at Number 4 Platform at Lime Street Station. From that day to this the dog on taking him home at night always leads him to Number 4 Platform and I may add into the second carriage from the engine which is always third class. The dog knows when her harness is not held by her master that she is not on duty, and is merely a doggy friend. One of our men was in a building and not working his dog when a heavy revolving door swung round and was about to knock him down when his dog hurled herself at him and pushed him out of the way of danger as she did on two or three other similar occasions. This shows the dog realised that her master was blind.

So you see when the dog has finished her three months at school the blind man then comes there for a three weeks' course to be trained together with his dog as already described. After this they return home fully trained and as a result of what they learn together there and work out for them-





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selves at home they eventually become absolutely perfect.

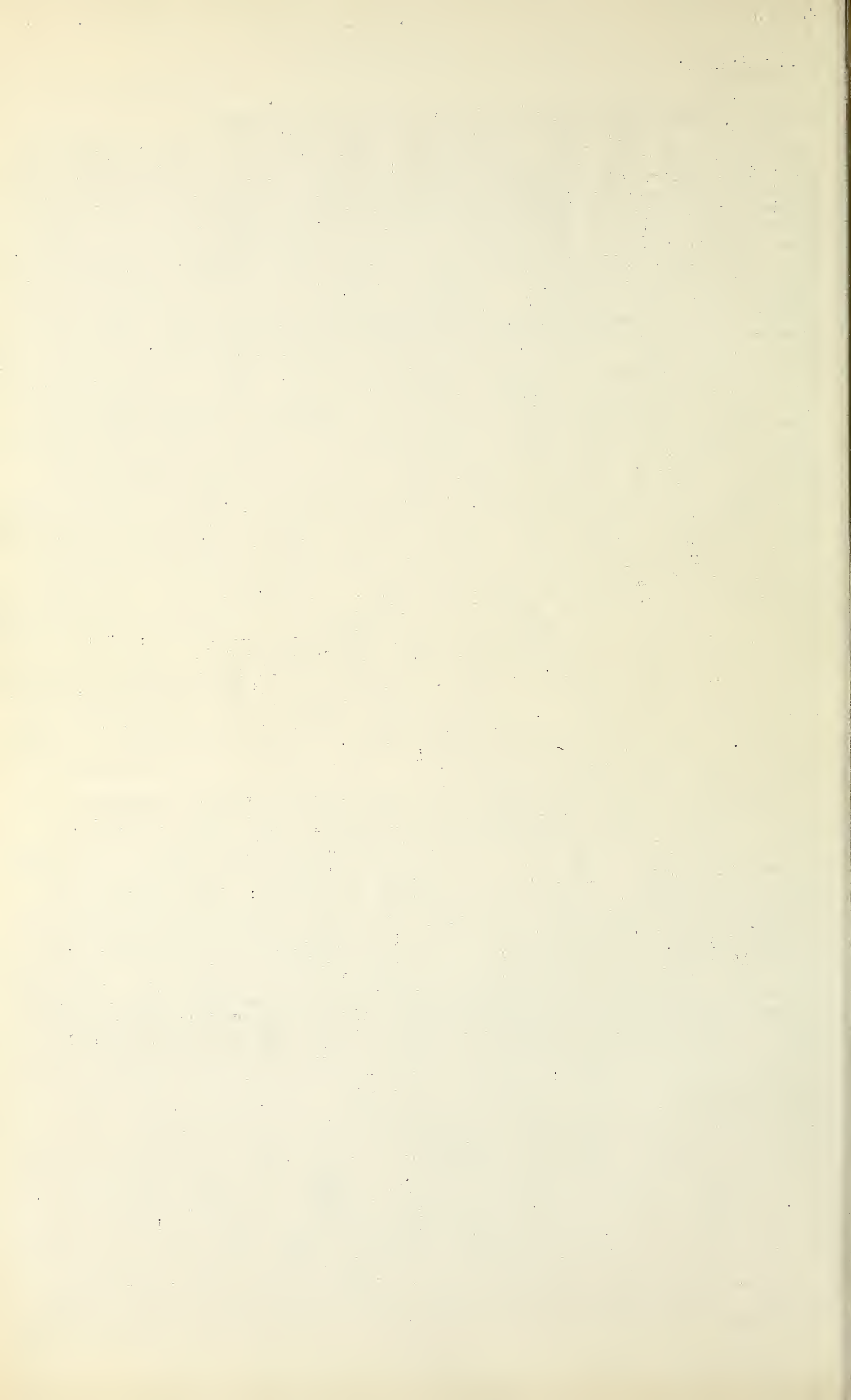
Now, what of the blind? Everyone is not suited to a dog. There are some who do not like dogs, others whose home conditions cannot include one and others whose temperaments do not lend themselves to understanding dogs. Statistics from other countries show that about 20 per cent of the blind between the ages of eighteen and sixty can derive benefit from the use of guide dogs. Even if this average is lower in England it must be a long time before all the blind who can employ dogs with advantage can be supplied. Such statistics also show that of the men and women supplied with dogs 90 per cent are helped to a higher physical status and 50 per cent to a higher economic and social status. In England with our small beginnings of only a dozen blind we cannot give you statistics and instances like they can in America and the Continent with their thousands of guide dogs. However, I can tell you this. Here it is not 90 per cent but 100 per cent of our men who have been helped to a higher physical status. All of them are healthier both physically and mentally, happier, and look younger and fitter in every way. One of our blind men who is a masseur at Wallasey has a paralysed patient of fifteen stone to massage. He used to find it most tiring and was completely done after he had finished. He now tells me he feels perfectly well and not tired afterwards. The fact is that before when going to a case he was put on a bus and possibly met at the other end. He now prefers to walk to cases and on other occasions, and so keeps hard and fit. The other day he had to keep two appointments a considerable distance apart and with so little time between the two that he said had he had to rely on a human guide he would never have been able to rush from one place to the other and keep both appointments as he was able to do. You know unemployment in America is worse than here. I believe there are 10,000,000 unemployed there. It is therefore satisfactory to be able to quote you the following written by the Chairman of the Seeing Eye in America: "The Seeing Eye dog guide says 'I can make my master self-supporting'. It is a startling statement to make at this time when to all appearance even 'seeing' men are out of work, but it is true. In the past eighteen months eighteen Pennsylvanian blind have been taken off the unemployment list and have .... become self-supporting .... and three other men in course of training with Seeing Eye dogs have jobs waiting for them ... a court interpreter - a radio position, and a salesman with a clothing firm, accorded to them because through their dogs they are mobile."

The greatest boon which every blind man we have supplied emphasises is the regaining of their independence and elimination of nervous strain. They all say how their world has been extended in size and as one or two put it to me there is no limit to the distances they can travel. How much it must mean to go anywhere in the country or busy streets at a fast brisk health-giving pace. A blind man has just written me: "Though I am out and about constantly with my dog and often along roads and lanes which have no sidewalk, but much used by traffic, I have not had the slightest mishap in these two years. To put the matter in a nutshell - I go where I like and when I like. As one who has had much experience of getting about alone since 1917 I can say that a Guide Dog makes all the difference." He also writes of a windy day and increasing traffic now being quite easy for him.

One of our men who has recently gone to live in a fresh district already knows it better than his wife who can see and he goes for fourteen mile walks. Our men tell of going for walks on their own which they had never been able to do for years, and have been able to put on their hats and hop out at any moment to see friends or run errands. The other day I saw a blind man who has no dog and collects for some blind institution. He is known for the way he gets about by himself and is one of those who can manage better than others and is clever, but there was no mistaking he was blind by the way he paused and fumbled at certain steps and corners and had to be helped, of course, across the road. I could not help comparing him, with his slow pace and stoutish, rather unhealthy appearance, with one of our men I had been to see just previously and also watched, striding along with his dog at four miles an hour, healthy-looking, hard, lean and tanned. You could not help noticing the one was blind, while no-one could possibly realise that the other could not see - and that is the whole difference.

I have received the following letter from a blind poultry farmer this morning: "It is only the blind person that really knows the value of the guide dog. Edwina is the joy of my life. I lost my sight during the War.





Then I returned home. I was admitted in to St. Dunstan's and was trained to be a Poultry Farmer, but everywhere I wanted to go I had to have some one to take me. But I have had the pleasure of having a guide dog and it has brought new life into me. I would not part with her for anything... She takes me all over, collects eggs, carries corn and chick mash, brings all my joiner tools, brings all my poultry in. She will waken me up at 5 o'clock every morning by pushing her nose in to the bed clothes until I answer her, then she will bring my slippers and trousers and waits until I have breakfast, then she will get the keys for the farm and will carry the corn for me while I am watering up. I think I cannot speak enough about her." I may say we do not train dogs to do all this.

Any questions you wish to ask we shall be only too happy to try to answer and to give you the names and addresses of local men supplied with dogs. I only wish to say that I have heard it argued that a certain blind man earning a good wage preferred to pay 25s. Od. to 30s. Od. a week to a human to having a guide dog for which the only expense is food. This seems absurd. The human guide will say goodbye on the doorstep but the dog is only too happy and willing to go out at any time with his master, to whom he give that priceless gift of complete independence. Now that I have told you a little of what we are setting out to do I cannot do better than conclude by quoting what our Vice-Chairman said in a speech to a county association in the South of England;

"Now I want to ask you if you will help us. A West End Hospital very sensibly had in large letters on its walls 'Help is better than sympathy'. We do want your help. It is through your sympathetic co-operation and through that only that we shall be able to get the right sort of blind to use these dogs. We want you to tell the blind in your charge of this movement and to dispel their prejudices which are, I think, usually groundless and born of ignorance. We want you to recommend candidates for our dogs; men and women whom you with your experience will know to be suitable for them, but most of all we want your sympathy. We want to feel that the associations for the blind are working with us in our effort to bring light to them that sit in darkness."

Captain ROBINSON asked what breed of dog was used, and Captain SINGTON replied that it was the German Shepherd Dog, or Alsatian. In reply to Miss HOLDEN he gave the cost of maintenance as roughly 4s. Od. a week. Mr. HUGHES called attention to the fact that the Public Assistance Committee generally allowed 2s. Od. per week only for a child.

Mr. SIDDALL asked what was the average length of service a dog could give, and whether the person to give the demonstration would be totally or partially blind.

Captain SINGTON said the average life of service after training was nine years. The gentleman who would give the demonstration was the trainer of the dogs. It had not been possible to get a blind man to do it, but Captain Liakhoff would bandage his eyes. The dog he had brought for the demonstration had been training only for six weeks, and not for the full period of three months.

Councillor FLANAGAN asked what was the cost of replacement in the event of death, and Captain SINGTON said this was covered by insurance.

Mr. HAWTHORN asked who supplied the dogs, and Captain SINGTON explained that they were practically given. A blind man paid what he could afford, even if only a shilling.

#### DEMONSTRATION.

The meeting then adjourned to watch the demonstration, which was given in the street outside the Town Hall. The dog, which was fifteen months old, had to manipulate several street crossings, including the main street, and turn several corners.





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AFTERNOON SESSION, 2.30 p.m.

The CHAIRMAN said that he understood some delegates had not received their material for the meeting. This may have been due to some breakdown on the part of the Post Office and possibly this accounted for it. He understood that notices had been sent out in accordance with the Standing Orders, namely, seven days before the meeting. An effort would be made to dispatch them earlier in future.

7. He then called on Mr. Wm. WHITEHEAD, Honorary Treasurer of the Association, to give his paper on "The Remuneration of the Blind in Workshops". He was pleased that Mr. Whitehead was sufficiently recovered to deliver his paper, and though he was not in the best of health Councillor Yorke was sure he would show his usual fighting spirit in emphasising the points put forward.

Mr. WHITEHEAD, in introducing his paper, said that copies had been circulated beforehand so that delegates would have the opportunity of studying it more carefully. It had been the subject of much thought. We had waited for some pronouncement from the Association of Workshops, but nothing had as yet been put forward except a form of accounts approved by the Ministry of Health, but observed by few of the Association's own members. Our own Employment Sub-Committee had been very busy on other matters and had had to postpone the matter. But he thought there would be no harm in putting together his own ideas and submitting them as a contribution towards a very difficult subject.

Mr. WHITEHEAD then read his paper, which has been separately printed, and further copies of which may be obtained on request from the office of the Association, 274, Deansgate, Manchester, 3.

In concluding his paper Mr. WHITEHEAD said that he had confined himself to Workshops as a commercial proposition. But there was a great field for the voluntary system to provide social amenities. He had also advocated keeping the benevolent and social activities free from business transactions, and he asked the meeting not to confuse the two sections or to give undue preference to a minority of the blind.

The CHAIRMAN explained that Mr. Bradshaw's paper on the Home Teaching Service was to have been given at this conference, but the claims of those who wanted his services had prevented him from making certain alterations and revisions which he wished to make as the result of further experience. He suggested that questions on Mr. Whitehead's paper should be taken before the discussion so that every point should be perfectly clear.

Mr. HUGHES referred to the point raised by Mr. Whitehead in reference to a department for those failing to qualify as journeymen. Did he mean that these people should receive a standard of wages, make the same goods they would have made if successful, and then their goods be put into competition with the goods made by the workshop employees? How would he dispose of the goods from this occupational room?

Mr. NEWSON (Middlesbrough) asked whether, in suggesting that the rates of payment should be reviewed every four weeks, Mr. Whitehead had taken into account the time when the man was unable to work, or on short time.

Councillor WILLIAMSON (Halifax) asked if Mr. Whitehead had considered that in paying augmentation of £1 the full amount had to be paid, whereas in making up the income of the unemployable blind to £1 perhaps only 5s. 0d. would be paid.

Replying to these three questions, Mr. WHITEHEAD said that the occupational room was for those who had not the ability to make goods of a marketable quality. He would not consider that the goods made there would enter into competition with those made in the Workshops, which should have a standard of quality which would be marketable. The room was purely to provide manual and mental occupation. He did not care whether the goods were burnt or disposed of as imperfect. The idea was to keep people in better mental and physical condition and should be a charge against the welfare of





the blind. To secure a market for goods there must be a standard of quality, and great mischief had been done by the difference in qualities.

In reply to Mr. Newson Mr. WHITEHEAD said that he argued that with good marketing and salesmanship the product of the blind was so small that there should be no difficulty in disposing of it and no slack time. He did not take into account periods of unemployment. They were the fault of the marketing, not of the blind person.

Replying to Councillor Williamson he said he had confined himself to Workshops. Augmentation belonged to the benevolent side.

Councillor HURLEY (Hull) quoted a sentence from Mr. Whitehead's paper - "I argue, therefore, that the best method of assessing the earnings of the worker is on a piece work basis". Had Mr. Whitehead considered the possibility that a worker, although blind within the meaning of the Act, might be sufficiently sighted to carry out a certain class of work and might in consequence have an advantage over the other workers. By introducing piece work as a basis the partially sighted had an advantage over the totally blind. He did not agree with piece work in any sense or any industrial sphere, least of all with the blind.

Mr. HAWTHORN (Warrington) said he was going to put the same question. Did Mr. Whitehead's scale regard the physical condition of the worker? Did Workshops exist for occupation or for economic reasons?

Mr. WHITEHEAD said it had been impossible to go into every detail in his paper and his suggestions could be varied as long as the principle was maintained. A partially sighted man might be put to help totally blind men. That was a matter for the organisation of the Workshop. It would certainly appear that a partially sighted man would have a better chance, but the greater his earnings the less would be his augmentation. He did not see how a distinction could be made, except perhaps by giving the partially sighted jobs for which they were better fitted than the totally blind; e.g., boring.

The CHAIRMAN then declared the matter open for discussion.

Mr. HAWTHORN said he had listened to Mr. Whitehead's paper with great interest. It seemed to be an attempt at the partial abolition of piece work. Practically all the industries in Blind Welfare were sweated labour and it was an endeavour to take some of the perspiration out of them. Warrington had practically abolished piece work and instituted a grading scheme, and with the permission of the meeting he would like to read a short paper which he had prepared in reference to the abolition of piece work.

There was some dissent, and the CHAIRMAN finally ruled that the discussion must proceed on the lines of Mr. Whitehead's paper only. Mr. HAWTHORN accordingly withdrew his suggestion but offered to supply copies of the Warrington grading scheme on request.

Councillor CLYDESDALE said that Mr. Whitehead's fundamental mistake was in making comparisons between employed workmen and the unemployable blind. A blind man in workshops had to take his position as an ordinary citizen and was under an obligation to provide for himself and his dependents. The unemployable blind person received an individual grant and did not accept responsibility for his dependents. For instance, two married blind people might have a joint income of £2. 7. 6. a week and in addition would get an allowance if they had a child. But in the same town, if that blind man was a worker, he would have to keep his wife and child without any further addition or call on voluntary funds.

Mr. WHITEHEAD protested at this statement.

Councillor CLYDESDALE admitted that there might be one or two instances where that did not obtain, but he could not anticipate the vagaries of administration in every particular instance. The general scheme approved by the Ministry of Health, and endorsed by all responsible authorities, had insisted that a blind man in a blind Workshop, receiving adequate wages, carried the full responsibility of a citizen, while for the administration of blind welfare for the unemployable blind the Act specifically stated, if he remembered rightly, that allowances were made for a blind individual and not for a family. Therefore if his facts were true Mr. Whitehead's





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comparisons were absolutely incomplete.

Mr. WHITEHEAD said he could not agree that they were true.

Councillor CLYDESDALE insisted that they were, and he did not want Mr. Whitehead or anyone else to be left under any misunderstanding.

Mr. WHITEHEAD read out the following paragraph from his paper: "It does not seem right to me that one with the many advantages of employment in a Workshop and no family responsibilities, should receive more from benevolence, in addition to wages earned, than one who has none of those advantages, yet there are cases where 36/-, and even as much as 40/-, per week is paid in augmentation when the maximum to a blind person not so employed is only 25/-."

Councillor CLYDESDALE said that Mr. Whitehead was proposing that a difference should be made in every workshop for a married man and a single one. Who would stand up for Workshops under those circumstances? They were trying in one place and he knew with what unhappy results.

With a great deal of Mr. Whitehead's paper he agreed. He agreed that a blind man should do his best in the Workshop, and he encouraged them as far as he could. But as a corollary to that he charged the administration of every institution throughout the country with an equal responsibility to see that the blind man got a chance to do his best. Unfortunately, through the traditional carelessness attached to a large number of old institutions, the efficiency in administration, costing, construction of the building, the general managerial side of the workshop, including salesmanship and marketing and purchasing, were so imperfect that for a long time to come it would be a pathetic travesty of justice to saddle a blind man with an attempt at efficiency. Mr. Whitehead's scale was a kind of extended piece work, with some of its virtues, a few of its vices missed out and some added. According to the present piece work system the worker got his augmentation at the end of a week's work assessed on that week's earnings with an adjustment according to arrangement. Mr. Whitehead's scale recognised the piece work but postponed the adjustment for a month.

Mr. WHITEHEAD said the month's postponement was a suggestion only.

Councillor CLYDESDALE considered that the adjustment should take place as frequently as possible in order to maintain the balance, and therefore a weekly balance was better both for the management and the worker. Piece work would kill itself in some ways because of postponement, for there was a psychological reaction to postponement of payment for effort. If the adjustment was postponed for six months how would a worker recollect his earnings? It was an unsatisfactory proposition both from the point of view of the management and the blind person. He knew a good deal about the inside working of Workshops and could say that it would not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion to postpone this settlement.

What was wrong with blind Workshops was that once a blind man was admitted he was doomed to stay there for the rest of his life, no matter what his capacity might be. Incompetent managers and committees would sit in judgment on his efforts. A blind man was cramped and his ambitions stifled, and under these conditions the incentive to work was killed very early in life. In other parts of the world they did not do that. One found blind men in charge of blind welfare, but not so in Britain. Twice recently he had reproached workers for slacking, and after a talk they had agreed that the Workshop existed for them and in order to preserve its usefulness they must make an effort to protect it. But they asked him to protect them against inefficient costing and management. Then they asked what was the good of making an effort with inefficiency at the top.

The CHAIRMAN asked Councillor Clydesdale to confine his remarks to Mr. Whitehead's paper.

Councillor CLYDESDALE considered that all his remarks arose out of the paper.

Mrs. POLLARD (Oldham) asked that there should be a time limit for every speaker.

The CHAIRMAN asked Councillor Clydesdale to be as brief as possible.

Councillor CLYDESDALE said the solution of the Workshop problem must be tackled from an angle different from Mr. Whitehead's. The Blind Workshop was a place which must provide an opportunity for a blind man or woman to get a sufficient income from their own efforts with augmentation to enable them to go back into civil life as ordinary beings, free to spend their wages as anyone in an ordinary factory. They were in a different position





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from the unemployable blind. If that was admitted they could start from the position as to what was a reasonable standard of living. Members of a municipal council had to decide on what was a reasonable standard of life for Corporation employees. In his own Corporation they had set a minimum of 1s. 1d. per hour for a sighted man, but there was no minimum for a blind man, and how a blind man could be expected to live for less than a sighted he did not know. The principle was that of the Minimum Wage. No-one advocated a Standard Wage. Mr. Whitehead had quoted Mr. Ben Purse, who had been in the Chair when the minimum wage policy of the National League of the Blind was adopted. He was in a different place now. It was as justifiable to pay a minimum wage to a blind person as to a sighted one. The training a blind person received was not his fault. Before he left the training centre his capacity for output both with regard to quantity and quality should be ascertained. After that it was a question for the man himself.

Mr. MINES (Liverpool) said they had kept to the piece work system in Liverpool and found it answered very well. He could not see the necessity for working out an hourly system. In Liverpool they reckoned that a mat-maker should earn 18s. 0d. a week, and men in other trades 24s. 0d. Augmentation from charitable sources came to £1 a week, and the minimum wage for any man was £2. 0. 0. but they could earn any amount above this. Other people as well as the blind had to go on in the same groove. He knew of blind men earning over £3. 0. 0. which was considerably more than the minimum wage for Corporation employees in Newcastle. Mr. Whitehead had remarked about the quality of the goods, but quantity was also a necessary factor. Liverpool had found piece work satisfactory and there was no deficit.

Councillor FLANAGAN said that nearly twenty years ago he had attended a meeting in Manchester to listen to unctious people talking about the blessings of piece work. Like the last speaker none of them had ever done any. Mr. Mines said the most brilliant blind man in Liverpool was earning £3.0.0. a week. Councillor Flanagan would like to know how many there were doing this. The most inefficient police constable must have more than £3.0. 0. a week, and it was very rarely you heard of one being discharged for inefficiency. It was a good job not paid on results. He welcomed parts of Mr. Whitehead's paper. It showed backward authorities that it was possible to give a guaranteed minimum income to each institutional employee of 40s. 0d. But it went on to state that it was possible for miracles to happen and for an employee to earn 64s. 0d. a week.

Mr. WHITEHEAD said this was only a supposititious calculation showing what might be. He had not said it was so.

Councillor FLANAGAN said he was glad he realised the impossibility of Grade 13.

Mr. WHITEHEAD said it had been known in the past.

Councillor FLANAGAN asked how the worker's real earning power was to be assessed. What was the minimum earning power to qualify a worker as an efficient journeyman? What was the minimum income, wages and augmentation, which it was considered a qualified worker should receive. At Bradford they had 150 workshop employees, 110 of whom were males. They had decided they could assess the worker's earning capacity by ascertaining the value of his or her production. That went at one side of the ledger. But there was a psychological aspect. Some of the most industrious workers were those who went out with the poorest earnings, because they had not the gift of touch. One of the women at Bradford, for instance, was very clever at arithmetic but not at knitting and could not make 10s. 0d. a week, the field of accountancy being closed to her. They had a dozen genuine people of that sort in the grading scheme. They assessed the earning power of this particular case at 10s. 0d. but saw she did not go out with less than 30s. 0d. There were black sheep, of course, but there were in every scheme. Earnings were assessed according to the trade schedules, and were then made up to £2.10.0. per week. The blind people were rendering to the community the best they could and in return they gave a fixed guaranteed income to every institutional worker. They could submit figures to the Ministry showing exactly how much was spent and the cost of making up this minimum income, and it had been settled without piece work. There was one thing those responsible for management must know. One could not expect, with the present day scientific





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methods making the pace, to market goods made too quickly and therefore made badly. The blind person must be given the opportunity to turn out a good article and in response the management must see that he was not penalised at the pay box because of the care necessary to turn out a good article. Mr. Whitehead said "The first qualification of efficiency in a Blind Worker is not speed, but quality, for without quality speed is useless, and the quantity should always be a poor second to quality." It was an utter impossibility even in a sighted workshop to say that quality must come before speed. Speed was the thing. The best articles were not made on a piece work basis at all. The first thing was to try to convince some who had never had any experience that the need was to turn out not a swift article but a good one. At Bradford the system was run on thoroughly commercial lines through the City Treasurer's Department and they could submit to the Ministry at any time the exact cost.

Mr. WHITEHEAD (replying) said that his paper was a suggestion put forward with a view to making everyone think of this problem, which had to be considered. If the speakers had kept to his paper they would have seen that many points they had made were already answered, because they had simply repeated what he had said. No-one was more keen on efficient administration than himself, and he had spent fifteen years trying to improve the organisation of blind welfare. No-one could say he had ever suggested anything that would be detrimental to the blind, and he believed that efficient administration was for their welfare. His paper was meant to be an effort in that direction.

The monthly adjustment was entirely in favour of the worker. Sometimes he would have a bad week because he was not in good form, but he would have an opportunity of recovering himself in the other three weeks and would not drop down in his wages. He would get the income even if he was off work for a day or two. Four weeks was not too long. It had been experimented with and found practical.

Councillor Flanagan had said that at Bradford they assessed the value of each worker. Mr. Whitehead said he was puzzled to know how the value of a worker could be assessed except by the value of his product. And if that was not done on a piece work basis he did not see how it could be done. Bradford was well known for its generous treatment of the blind. He thought Councillor Flanagan would not contradict him if he said that in addition to the wages earned it cost nearly £130 a year to employ one worker at Bradford Institution. Councillor Flanagan had also said that on piece work speed was bound to be the most important factor, but his system was not piece work but payment by the hour. Piece work was only the basis by which the value was assessed. Quality was the first thing, and no intelligent management would encourage blind workers to rush things to the detriment of quality.

Mr. Whitehead said that years ago he had fought Councillor Clydesdale over the grading system. Eventually a grading system was evolved of which Councillor Clydesdale approved and the workers endorsed it. It had now been discontinued but that was not his fault. Councillor Clydesdale had been responsible for putting into operation a similar system at Hull.

Mr. Whitehead thought it was a paper worth thinking about. (Hear! Hear!) He believed something could be done regionally on the lines suggested if the Local Authorities got together. The system was workable and the principle was sound.

Mr. SIDDALL said it gave him great pleasure to thank Mr. Whitehead for his excellent paper. Whatever was thought of the contents of it everyone must agree that he had given great trouble and thought to it. The suggestions were there as a jumping off place. Mr. Whitehead was quite justified when he said that for the last fifteen years he had tried to encourage more efficient workshop management and more efficient workshops for the blind. He had at any rate put forward suggestions which he believed to have a sound basis, and he was glad to thank Mr. Whitehead on behalf of the meeting for the excellent paper and for his service to the Northern Counties both on this occasion and on previous ones. If any of the delegates had not come into contact with Mr. Whitehead that had been their misfortune. He had once again put his business acumen at their disposal and it was another occasion on which they were greatly indebted to him.





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Mr. NEWSON said it afforded him great pleasure to second the vote of thanks. As a Workshop manager he had followed the paper closely. Councillor Clydesdale criticised the managers at nearly every Conference. There were many points of difficulty and he was very glad indeed of the help Mr. Whitehead gave them.

Councillor FLANAGAN hoped that Mr. Whitehead would be with them for many more years. Everyone agreed that it was difficult to lay down a basis of discussion where there was no basis at all, and it was impossible to allow a paper so full of meat to go without any criticism, and Mr. Whitehead had been very tolerant in his replies. He would ask Bradford to send him the figures of the cost of employment as he did not know where he had got the figure of £130 for each employee.

Mr. WHITEHEAD, acknowledging the vote of thanks, said he would be very glad to do all he could for the organisation as long as he could. Even yet it required a great deal of improvement.

The CHAIRMAN proposed a vote of thanks to all those who had helped with the arrangements for the meeting and the visits to institutions.

Captain ROBINSON seconded the motion.

Mr. KERSHAW acknowledged the vote of thanks.

Before the close of the meeting Alderman ROSE suggested that the next meeting of the Association might be held in Liverpool, but it was agreed to leave this decision to the Executive Committee, invitations from other constituents to be sent to the Secretary of the Association.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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Northern Counties Association  
for the Blind,  
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